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ABSTRACT

One of 10 sites chosen for multi-year funding under the National Institute of Education's rural Experimental Schools Program (ES), the New Hampshire School Supervisory Union 58 ES Project was a community-based effort, serving 3 autonomous school districts and operative between July 1973-July 1978. Serving a total population of 3,816, the project goals were to: create an instructional program to meet the needs of Union 58 students; upgrade the instructional content, concepts, and skills of classroom teachers; bring about a degree of change in both the instructional program and administrative structure of the local school system; and provide a basis for on-going instructional review and revision. Project components were: adult education; career education; language arts; outdoor education; and teacher in-service training. Project staff consisted of: the project administrator; a career education coordinator (K-12), a language arts coordinator (K-12), an environmental/outdoor education coordinator (K-12), an in-house project (Level I) evaluator, and a secretary/bookkeeper. Contracted services were provided by two agencies and numerous community resource people. Recommendations based upon project results indicated procedural needs incorporating: involvement and commitment on the part of administrators, teachers, school boards, and local citizenry; clearly stated timelines; teacher involvement in in-service program development; integrated program development efforts; and identification of specific tasks for all members of the instructional team. (JC)

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A Process For Comprehensive Educational Change: THE EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN RURAL AMERICA

A Case Study
(1973-1978)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Oakes Peters has directed the NIE funded Experimental Schools (ES) project in northern New Hampshire since July 1973. The Union 58 ES project was one of ten such R & D projects funded, nationwide, by the National Institute of Education (Washington, DC) for purposes of affecting comprehensive curriculum change and documenting/evaluating the on-going process of instructional program development, implementation, evaluation/revision and infusion -- as well as teacher in-service training (Kindergarten through grade twelve).

The author received his Bachelor of Science in Education and Masters of Education degrees from the University of Maine (Orono); pursued doctoral level studies in Social Studies Education at The Florida State University; and was granted the Doctor of Education degree in curriculum and instruction by The University of Rochester (NY).

Dr. Peters has been a classroom teacher of social studies, general science, and general mathematics (grades 5-12); has been a graduate assistant assigned to the campus laboratory school at The Florida State University; has supervised student teachers at The University of Rochester; has taught graduate level curriculum courses; has been an ESEA Title III Curriculum Researcher for an inner city project; has been a K-12 curriculum coordinator; has been a grades 9-12 department chairman; and has directed the NIE funded Experimental Schools Project since 1973.

Dr. Peters is a member of Alpha Kappa Delta (The University of Southern California) and Delta Tau Kappa (Florida State University) as well as a recipient of the Association for Geographic Education's Teacher Merit Award (1971). He has been a past member of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Instructional Media Advisory Committee (1971-1974) and NCSS Curriculum Advisory Committee (1974-1977). Dr. Peters is currently a member of the New Hampshire State Advisory Committee for Career Education.

Dr. Peters' publication credits include position papers for several ERIC Clearinghouses, articles in The Education Forum, Environmental Education Report, Social Education, Rural/Regional Education News, Educational Technology, and Educational Leadership as well as a How To Do It pamphlet for the National Council for the Social Studies and a classroom simulation game for Stem, Inc. of Provo, Utah.

Dr. Peters has conducted *how to do it* workshops across the nation in pre-school level instructional materials, career education, environmental education, and social studies education.

FORWARD

The Experimental Schools (ES) program was designed by the National Institute of Education (NIE), Washington, DC, to test the efficacy of a strategy for building a bridge between educational research and actual practice. Experimental Schools represented a new approach for federal change efforts, involving local school districts and the federal government as partners in a cooperative effort of field experiments in educational change.[1]

THE RURAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM

In early 1972 the U.S. Office of Education inagurated the rural portion of the Experimental Schools program. This program was committed to the proposition that local problems (in small rural school systems) must be solved with local initiative and can be best solved by capitalizing on the unique strengths of each community.

An emphasis was placed upon a *comprehensive* approach to education improvement in order to find out whether new educational programs which address all parts of an educational system simultaneously can be more effective than past reform efforts which focused on only one or several parts of an educational system at a time.

Comprehensive change was defined by the National Institute of Education as:

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[1] Robert E. Herriott. The Rural Experimental Schools Program: Some Implications for Federal Reformers (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Associates, Inc., April 1977), pgs. 1-2.

1. a fresh approach to the nature and substance of the total curriculum in light of local needs and goals;
2. reorganization and training of instructional staff to meet particular project goals;
3. innovative use of time, space, and facilities;
4. active community involvement in developing, operating, and evaluating the project; and
5. an administrative and organizational structure which supports the project and which takes into account local strengths and needs.

By 1973, ten small rural school systems, nationwide, had been selected by NIE for multi-year funding. The funds were authorized only to help the chosen rural school districts transform their educational programs, and could not be employed to subsidize activities previously underway or to pay for routine capital improvements and operating costs.

ES programs established and funded in Alaska, Arizona, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming were directly involved with instructional program development, implementation, evaluation, revision, infusion and process monitoring as well as teacher in-service training.

A CASE STUDY

An NIE funded Experimental Schools Program project became operational in New Hampshire School Supervisory Union 58 on July 1, 1973 and served three autonomous school districts (Northumberland, Stark, and Stratford) through June 30, 1978.

The local ES project served a Kindergarten through grade twelve student population of approximately 1,100 and an instructional faculty/staff of sixty-five housed in three elementary schools (K-6) and two high school buildings (grades 7-12).

Based upon the 1970 census, the total human population of School Union 58 communities was 3,816. SEE APPENDIX A. The major industries of the area are Groveton Papers Company and several small family businesses.[2]

I. CENTRAL THEME

The purpose of the New Hampshire School Supervisory Union 58 ES project was the development of a community centered school which:

a. utilized available human and natural resources to foster positive attitudes toward learning;

b. provided individuals with the basic psychomotor skills which would enable them to realize personal goals; and

c. utilized community resource facilities as a basis for lifetime learning opportunities.

II. GOALS

To create an instructional program to meet the needs of Union 58 students; to upgrade the instructional content, concepts and skills of classroom teachers; to bring about a

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[2] Charles I. Stannard. Rural America: A Social and Educational History of Ten Communities (Chapter 7) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Abt Associates, April 1975) pg. 518.

degree of change in both the instructional program and administrative structure of the local school system; and to provide a basis for on-going instructional review and revision.

III. COMPONENTS

The Union 58 ES project consisted originally of five components:

1. adult education
2. career education
3. language arts
4. outdoor education
5. teacher in-service training.

Over the course of the several project years the outdoor education component (extra-curricular weekend camping/hiking trips) was expanded to include classroom and field based environmental education awareness/exposure/instruction for students (K-12).

1. Adult Education

From Fall 1973 through December 1976 two hundred and sixty-one (261) community people were enrolled in a total of thirty (30) ES program sponsored classes, e.g., cake decorating, ceramics, crocheting, holiday crafts, painting, upholstering, and weaving.[3] The thrust of this component was the development and offering of arts-and-crafts, leisure-time oriented classes for community members. The majority of

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[3] The Future of Adult Education in NH School Union 58. Experimental Schools Program, June 1977, pgs. 1-3.

classes offered were taught by community resource people and not by the school system's faculty and staff. Truly, ESP's community adult classes were activities for community members taught by fellow citizens.

A strong emphasis was placed upon leisure-time activities rather than highly structured, academic classes because past experience had shown that most community members do not readily take to adult basic education classes. *The majority of people in the three towns have not completed high school. In general, education is not a major concern of the people in Union 58.*[4]

2. Career Education

Goal: A Kindergarten through grade twelve program to affect student awareness, exploration, and skills development/ application re: diverse world of work careers and occupations.

Together, the ES project staff and classroom teachers (K-12) developed a series of instructional lessons/units related to the several subject matter areas of the curriculum.

The lessons/units were compiled into a 5 x 8 inch index card format. These QUICK CARDS were used by teachers as they infused career education into the on-going instructional process throughout the several grades.

Community resource people served as guest speakers, field trip chaperones, resource site field trip guides, mini course instructors, and worksite supervisors/instructors.

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[4] Stannard, pages 566 and 616.

In grades seven through twelve, students were enrolled in skills training mini courses, career counseling sessions, and placed at area resource sites (worksites) for purposes of vocational skills training and on-the-job application in real world of work environments.

Instructional materials were purchased and housed in resource rooms developed in the several buildings. This strategy guaranteed the availability of materials to teachers and students on a continuous basis.

3. Language Arts

Goal: A strategy to affect the basic communication skills development of all students.

The Scott Foresman leveled reading series was adopted as the basic instructional program for Kindergarten through grade six. At grades seven through twelve a variety of series were employed. Functional and remedial reading classes were offered to selected grade seven/eight students at both Union 58 high schools.

Together, the ES project staff and classroom teachers (K-6) developed a continuous, integrated, and sequential language arts curriculum based upon identified basic communication skills.[5]

Instructional materials were purchased and housed in resource rooms developed in the several buildings. This

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5 Basic Skills and Competencies: A Communications Based Skills List. Experimental Schools Program, 1977.

strategy guaranteed the availability of materials to teachers and students on a continuous basis.

4. Environmental/Outdoor Education

Goal: Student awareness of, exposure to, and exploration of the total life space environment of the community.

> *Man interacts with both natural and social environmental phenomena on a day-to-day basis. Interaction alone is not enough, if we are to intelligently conserve, manage, and protect our natural and human resources. An introduction to and awareness of the natural surroundings provides a basis for direct human interaction with environmental phenomena and enhances leisure-time activities and recreation.* [6]

Kindergarten through grade twelve students were directly exposed to their life space environment via field trips, guest speakers, nature walks, community studies emphasizing the use of graphic media devices for data collection purposes, environmental lab site studies, and weekend daytrips and overnight camping/hiking trips as well as vicarious exposure via audio visual software, e.g., films, filmstrips, printed materials, and video tapes.

Selected students were involved in 'how to do it' skills development workshops conducted by Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) staff members from Pinkham Notch, NH.

Together, the ES project staff and classroom teachers developed a series of instructional lessons/units which were compiled into a 5 x 8 inch index card format; the Student Environmental Awareness (SEA) QUICK CARDS.

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[6] Richard O. Peters, "New Hampshire Program", Environmental Education Report (Washington, DC: Center for Environmental Education, Inc., April 1976) pg. 9.

Parcels of land in the local communities were donated for use by students as EE lab sites, and community resource people served as guest speakers, mini course instructors, and site guides.

Students in grades six through twelve were involved in weekend daytrips and overnight camping/hiking trips conducted by building level outing club staffs.

Instructional materials were purchased and housed in resource rooms developed in the several buildings. This strategy guaranteed the availability of materials to teachers and students on a continuous basis.

5. In-Service Training

Goal: Teacher awareness of and exposure to career education, language arts, and environmental/outdoor education concepts, instructional content, enrichment materials, and pedagogical methodologies/techniques.

The success of any workshops program is dependent upon the degree to which it directly involves the classroom teacher and meets his/her immediate as well as long range needs and interests.[7] The local ES project serviced both the immediate and long range needs of teachers re: ES project program development, from July 1973 through June 1977.

Utilizing workshops, skillshops, and minishops (SEE APPENDIX B) as well as field trips, guest speakers, visitations, and consultants from business/industry, institutions of higher

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7 Richard Peters, "In-Service Workshops", The Common (Durham, NH: New England Program In Teacher Education, June 1973) pg. 4.

education, and state departments of education, the local ES project staff involved Union 58 teachers in an on-going process of skills development and application as related to the several component areas of the funded project.

In-service training also provided the opportunity for direct teacher involvement with instructional program development, implementation, evaluation and revision. Curricula were developed on both large group and individual teacher bases from July 1973 through June 1977.

IV. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The most important element in the processes of change and program development is TIME.

When the ES project became operational in Union 58 (July 1973) there did not exist locally any semblance of career education or environmental/outdoor education nor a continuous, integrated and sequential language arts program, a leisure-time oriented adult education program, nor an on-going process for teacher in-service training.

From July 1973 through June 1977 the ES project staff worked directly with classroom teachers, students, community resource people, school system administrators, and the local school boards to affect educational change and program development deemed important in a 1972 needs assessment survey and incorporated into the original local planning year project proposal of April 1973.

By July 1st (1977) the local ES project had established the bases for adult education, career education, language

arts, environmental education, and teacher in-service training in Union 58. During the 1977-1978 school/project year, the onus was upon the local school system to infuse ES project programs into local curricula.

V. GOVERNANCE

Supervisory Union 58 is a loose confederation of geographically coterminous and autonomous school districts created by the state for administrative purposes.

A reason for the lack of common planning among the three school districts is the fact that there is virtually no interdependence between the three school districts which would make interaction and common planning necessary. People feel there is little value in common planning .

The superintendent is responsible to three autonomous school boards with school systems that, in actuality, vary considerably in their problems, needs, and financial resources. The variability between school boards and districts, combined with the relatively great power of the local boards, acts to reduce the amount of direct educational influence and supervision that come from the top -- the superintendent's office. This tends to create a leadership vacumm at the district level and can reduce the amount of integration of the school system.

One result of the leadership vacuum is that the key educational leaders in the districts become the principals who are charged with running the educational program of their buildings. The initiative for programs and curricular change tends to reside with them. Conversely, the principals also have the ability to impede program and curricular change.[8]

The local ES project governance rested with the COUNCIL. Its membership consisted of the Superintendent of Schools or a representative from the central office, the ES project administrator (Director), and the several district level building principals.

While the COUNCIL was charged with overall project development and implementation in Union 58 the day-to-day

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[8] Stannard, pgs. 591 and 617.

operations of the local project and supervision of staff became the responsibilities of the project administrator.

The ES ADVISORY BOARD consisted of representatives from the Union 58 communities, the student body, and the professional faculty/staff. The ES project administrator served as chairperson of the ADVISORY BOARD. The board was charged with advising the ES COUNCIL re: 1) program development, 2) identification and utilization of community resource; both people and places, in the instructional process, and 3) community needs in the area of adult education.

VI. PROJECT STAFF

At the apex of its operations in Union 58 the ES project staff consisted of the project administrator, a career education coordinator (K-12), a language arts coordinator (K-12), and environmental/outdoor education coordinator (K-12), an in-house project (Level I) evaluator, and a secretary/bookkeeper. Contracted services personnel represented the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Upper Connecticut Valley Mental Health Service, Inc., and community resource people taught adult education classes, career education oriented mini courses, functional/remedial reading courses, or served as members of the outing club staffs.

By the 1977-1978 school/project year the ES project staff had been phased down to the project administrator and secretary/bookkeeper. Activities and services previously provided students (K-12) by the ES project staff became the responsibility of the local school system staff and central office personnel.

VII. LEVEL I EVALUATION

Goal: To provide for an on-going process of monitoring and documenting instructional program development, implementation, evaluation, revision, and infusion into local curricula.

According to Robert G. Scanlon (1976) although considerable efforts, over the past thirty years, have produced a quantity of theoretical research, there is still limited practical know-how as to the implementation of innovative practices into schools. More must be learned about the ways in which change can be affected. There is clearly a need to expand the current level of knowledge about the installation of educational innovations.

The thrust of the local ES project was to provide practical know-how vis-a-vis the process of change and implementation of innovative practices into rural schools.

The Experimental Schools (ES) program provided the opportunity for on-site observation and documentation of the complex processes of educational change and program development. The Level I component provided the vehicle by which data was collected, analyzed, processed, and shared with decision makers at both the project and local school system levels, e.g., ES COUNCIL, central office, and school boards.

Although the local school system placed a priority interest in tallies e.g., number of students involved in activities, and the number of teachers documenting implemented lessons/

units, the project staff emphasized the need for research re: the process of program development and effect(s) upon learning.[9/10]

RESEARCH FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of program development experiences in Union 58, it can be stated that:

1. strong administrative leadership is essential to successful commitment for change.
2. teachers must play a direct role in the process of program development, implementation, evaluation, and revision.
3. local school boards must clearly state their commitment for change and must be willing to act in support of that policy whenever necessary.
4. building principals must assume a leadership role which encourages and directs the change process at the local school level of administration.
5. community members must have a voice in the process of program development, community resources identification, and community based instructional experiences.
6. clearly stated timelines must be established re: goals/objectives accomplishment.

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9 Richard O. Peters and L. Timothy Fisher. The Utilization of Natural, Social, and Human Community Resources in the Process of Student Career Awareness Development (Experimental Schools Program, April 1976).

10 Richard O. Peters and L. Timothy Fisher. A Process for Affecting Student Career Maturity Development in a Rural Schools System (Experimental Schools Program, May 1976).

7. clearly stated instructional program goals and objectives must be established and should constitute the basis for program implementation and evaluation.
8. teachers must be directly involved in developing the objectives and content of the in-service training program. In-service training must service both the needs of teachers and the process of instructional program development and implementation within the local school system.
9. There needs to be established a process for teacher assessment and evaluation vis-a-vis instructional program goals/objectives achievement.
10. specific tasks must be identified for every member of the instructional team, e.g., administrators, teachers, support staff, and volunteers, vis-a-vis curricula goals and objectives.
11. organized programs of instruction can have a marked and discernible effect upon student learning and concept development.
12. program development efforts, resources, and staff(s) must be well integrated into existing school systems and should not constitute an organization/structure external to that system.

RURAL COMMUNITIES: CHARACTER AND CONTRIBUTIONS

As is typical in most rural communities of America, *the school programs (in Union 58) have always been traditional. Not many students have continued their education after high*

school and many have not even completed high school. Most male/female workers in the area (approximately 85%) are employed in blue collar jobs.[11]

In rural communities, the *people have a strong sense of locale and place. They praise the virtures of the unhurried pace of life in the towns, the clean air, the lack of congestion, traffic and crime, and the beauties of the countryside. They value the fact that they live close to their relatives in a place where everybody knows everyone else. Religion and patriotism are both important and active religious and political organizations and a strong identification with the community (especially in the area of high school sports) creates rivalries among towns.*[12]

Because of their size and the limited availability of diverse resources; both people and places, the nature of rural communities somewhat delimits the full potential of community based instruction. Unlike its counterpart - the urban complex, the rural community provides students limited opportunities for field based instruction and on-the-job skills training and application. Rural school facilities are usually limited and the numbers of instructional staff are small -- thus effecting the nature and types of instruction and learning experiences made available to students. Whereas the nature and character of rural schools and their communities

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[11] Stannard, pgs. 550 and 568.

[12] Ibid., pgs. 576-577.

somewhat delimit instructional opportunities for students in the area of career education, in the field of environmental/ outdoor education those more-remote locales compliment and enrich student exposure to and direct interaction with the diverse character of natural surroundings.

The size of rural school populations lends itself well to the design and execution of field based research. On the other hand, logistics can be a bothersome variable when attempting to conduct a research study. In rural areas communities and schools tend to be spread out over the countryside and time must be spent traveling great distances between schools. This dispersion of the research sample population creates problems when attempting to treat all subjects - in the same way - at the same time.

Unlike in the urban setting where a researcher simply travels across town to treat the sample population, in the rural school system the researcher may have to devote several hours to travel in order to treat subjects. Hazardous winter conditions can seriously compound the problems of travel time and the physical remoteness of subjects.

COMMENTS

In the final analysis, the five years of the Experimental Schools (ES) project in Union 58 provided an extended opportunity to research the processes of program development and educational change in a field setting rather than in some sterile laboratory setting far removed from the real world of American education -- the classroom.

The local ES project years (1973-1978) provided a time when the process of change was carefully scrutinized and documented. It was a systematic opportunity to identify those variables which have both a positive and negative effect upon instructional program development, implementation, evaluation, revision, and infusion.

Across America, NIE's funded ES projects provided an opportunity to study and compare the simultaneous program development efforts of school systems having diverse organizational structures and governance, varied instructional facilities and staffs, and providing a profusion of learning opportunities to students.

The Experimental Schools Program provided the opportunity to look at a cross section of America and its educational enterprise from a field based research perspective -- over a period of time.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Union 58 School District

Populations[1]

(Based on the 1970 census)

TOWN	POPULATION
Northumberland	2,493
Stark	343
Stratford	980

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1 Charles I. Stannard. Rural America: A Social and Educational History of Ten Communities. (Abt Associates, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts, Chapter 7, April 1975) pg. 518.

APPENDIX B

In-Service Training[1]

WORKSHOPS: All-day and half-day release time sessions for purposes of skills development, materials construction, *how to do it* demonstrations and techniques, program orientation, and lesson/unit development as well as curriculum writing.

MINISHOPS: Two hour-or-less long enrichment activities concerned with materials introduction and *how to do it* demonstrations.

SKILLSHOPS: Follow-ups to workshop geared toward skills development and enrichment -- with direct involvement in hands-on activities under the supervision of skilled resource people.

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[1] Richard O. Peters and L. Timothy Fisher. The Utilization of Natural, Social, and Human Community Resources in the Process of Student Career Awareness Development (Experimental Schools Program, April 1976) pg. 10.